

Apologists Concerned About Rick Warren's Alignment With 'Holy Father'

"Christian unity" is one of those terms that stir up a whole spectrum of—sometimes emotional—opinions.

On the one hand, we know that Jesus prayed to the Father concerning future believers "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you" (John 17:21a, NIV).

On the other hand, charismatics know it is almost pointless to discuss the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12, 14) with Baptists or most anyone else from a mainline denomination. And Protestants of just about any stripe get riled up when they hear Catholics talking about papal infallibility or their adoration of the Virgin Mary.

It's on this latter point that Rick Warren, senior pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, and successful author, has waded into a hornet's nest of controversy by telling a *Catholic News Service* interviewer that Protestants and Catholics "have far more in common than what divides us" and that Catholics do not "worship Mary like she's another god."

Regarding Warren's view that Catholics do not worship Mary, Matt Slick, writing on the website of the Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry, goes into great detail with material from Roman Catholic sources that say Mary is "the all holy one," is to be prayed to, worshipped, that she "brings us the gifts of eternal life" and she "made atonement for the sins of man."

If that's not putting her in the place of Christ as a god-like

figure to be worshipped, then what is it?

"We believe in Trinity, the Bible, the resurrection, and that salvation is through Jesus Christ. These are the big issues," Warren says. "But the most important thing is if you love Jesus, we're on the same team."

To Warren's point about being on the same team, Slick writes, "If it's true that whoever loves Jesus is on the same team, then true love for him should manifest itself in dedication and obedience to his Word as revealed in Scripture. It's one thing to say that a group of people loves Jesus. It's another thing to demonstrate that it is true. When we see the many unbiblical teachings of the Catholic Church ... how could anyone say that they truly love Jesus? Sure, there are Catholics who love the real Christ, the one who died on the cross for our sins. That is not the problem. The problem is the Roman Catholic Church's false teachings concerning Mary and salvation."

"The unity that I think we would see realistically is not a structural unity but a unity of mission," Warren said. "And so, when it comes to the family we are co-workers in the field on this for the protection of what we call the sanctity of life, the sanctity of sex, and the sanctity of marriage. So there's a great commonality and there's no division on any of those three."

Slick also takes Warren to task for saying that Catholics and Protestants believe in the Bible.

"However, there is a significant difference between the Bible of the Protestants and the Roman Catholic Church which has added seven books: Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (also known as Ecclesiasticus), and Baruch. The Jews never recognized these books as being inspired of God, and neither Jesus nor the apostles ever quoted from them. In addition, there are numerous problems in

the apocryphal books such as the teaching of salvation by works (Tobit 4:11; 12:9), the offering of money for the sins of the dead (2 Maccabees 12:43), etc.”

He also notes that Catholics believe that salvation requires good works in addition to faith and grace—a view that is contrary to the Protestant Bible.

“Though it’s technically correct to say that Catholics believe in salvation through Jesus Christ, they reject justification by faith alone in Christ alone. Instead, they teach that good works of various kinds are necessary for salvation. Such teaching clearly contradicts biblical theology.”